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Deposited in DRO:

15 January 2018

Version of attached file:

Accepted Version

Peer-review status of attached file:

Not peer-reviewed

Citation for published item:

Parchizadeh, Jamshid and Williams, Samuel T. (2017) 'Save Iran's cheetah from extinction.', *Nature*, 552 (7683). p. 31.

Further information on publisher's website:

<https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-017-08183-8>

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Parchizadeh, J., and Williams, S.T. (2017) Save Iran's Cheetah from Extinction. *Nature* **552** (7683): 31-31. DOI [10.1038/d41586-017-08183-8](https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-017-08183-8).

Save Iran's cheetah from extinction

Jamshid Parchizadeh¹ and Samuel T. Williams^{2,3}

¹Third Floor, Number 24, Zartoshtian Alley, Hafez Street, Tehran City, Tehran Province, Iran

²Department of Zoology, School of Mathematical & Natural Sciences, University of Venda, Thohoyandou, South Africa

³Department of Anthropology, Durham University, Durham, United Kingdom

The Asiatic cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus* ssp. *venaticus*) is classed as critically endangered on the Red List of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, with just 43 individuals left in Iran. Conservation efforts were dealt a major blow last month when the United Nations Development Program announced its withdrawal from the Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah Project (see go.nature.com/2zrgyix).

Management of the project will now fall mainly to Iran's Department of the Environment, the head of which has declared the cheetah "doomed to extinction" on the basis of its declining numbers since 2001. We urge Iran's government not to give up on cheetah conservation.

19 It should instead look to the example of the giant panda (*Ailuropoda melanoleuca*) in China. The
20 Chinese government and its partners undertook to develop breeding programmes in the 1950s
21 and to protect bamboo- forest habitats in the 1980s. The strategy was so successful that pandas
22 were last year downlisted from endangered to vulnerable (see [go.nature.com/2hizc6w](https://www.nature.com/2hizc6w)).

23 Bringing the Asiatic cheetah back from the brink of extinction will require close cooperation
24 between governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and grass-roots
25 stakeholders. The government's wholehearted support is crucial.